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Family at dinner.

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FAMILY AT DINNER

A Thesis Presented

By

JEFFREY BAKER

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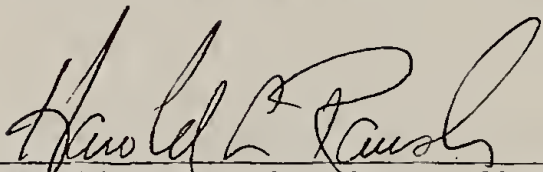
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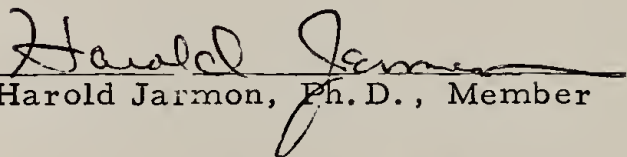
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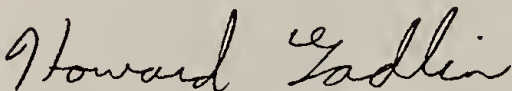
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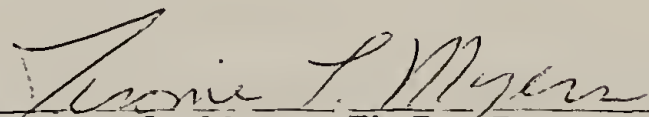
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Preface

Psychologists in recent decades have begun to treat the family therapeutically, describe its rules of functioning, and explore its significance to individual and social development. Experiments, case reports, theoretical writings, and narratives of planned interventions by therapists into their own families of origin have yielded useful theories and applications contributing to professional and public knowledge of what a family is. In part because the family is so complex, therapists increasingly are relying on videotaped records to communicate the massive amounts of information necessary to describe families and family therapy. The Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic rents out teaching tapes which accompany illustrations from family therapy with narrative in an attempt to make these enormous information packages more digestible.

In our own clinical training, especially with couples and families, we have found videotape a useful tool. We have also learned that while videotape stores and gives back enormous amounts of information, the information yield depends on how actively and insightfully the viewer engages the recorded data and makes explicit and public what he or she sees. Whether one tests specific hypotheses by coding and counting behaviors, builds theory around

larger interaction and system interpretations, seeks to infer relationship definitions by attributing meanings to behaviors, or tries with fewer attributions to see order in apparent chaos, the net result of descriptive work is information in a work-processed and more readily accessible form. The psychologist viewing a tape, like the archaeologist standing on a mound of buried information, must dig and reconstruct.

With video camera and recorder, then later with typewriter and reams of paper, we set out to qualitatively answer the question, "What is a family?" in such a way that the information we gathered could be readily used by many others. In sifting through interrelated options of what to look for, how to look, and how to communicate what we saw, we early decided that any given family was worth studying for the concrete realities of its private life, as independently as possible of the complicated explaining and justifying we are apt to impose on other lives. Our interest was in describing a single family with all the concrete exactness of which we were capable. We had further decided to write our description rather than rely on videotape or film narrative. In writing, simultaneous events must be differentiated and spelled out one after another. This had the advantage of forcing us to depict and consciously interrelate details of family behavior which even in thoughtful and repeated observation characteristically pass by as unrelated, unseen, or at least outside of awareness. Writing

from observation of videotape, we could look repeatedly while we learned to see.

We envisioned the finished work to be a usefully accurate written representation of the original audio-visual record. In translation from the seen to the written, time would be greatly slowed, events magnified, and internal scale reasonably well preserved. The successful finished whole would resemble as closely as possible in quality the global, undifferentiated whole we started with, but its parts would be considerably more differentiated and accessible. Necessarily, seeing and describing will always be selective and in other ways interpretative, despite painstaking efforts to meticulously represent time and detail, to check perceptions against each other, and to be self-aware in making broader qualitative judgments. However, we believe the gains in accessibility of information outweigh the losses incurred when researchers present their data.

We began by making a forty-eight minute videotape of dinner in the home of a family known to Brian who were not members of a clinical population and who were kind and trusting enough to help us. Using this tape as our data, we laboriously dug for detail, extracting onto paper every unambiguous event we could see within the limits of the video medium and our endurance. Simultaneously and progressively we reconstructed the dinner scene in written translation, checking and rechecking for veracity and explicitness of behavioral

detail and time relationships to the hoped for end of achieving qualitative accuracy of the written description to any given part and to the whole of the dinner scene as we were continually and newly seeing it.

Depiction of time and detail is quite objective relative to the more subjective work of judging and representing quality. The two are not in conflict, but exist in an unremitting interactive tension throughout scientific endeavor. Just as our increasing recognitions of details shaped our impressions of detail relatedness, so our impressions of detail relatedness led to recognitions of new details and corrections of previously seen ones. This interaction of the relatively objective and subjective produced two major products: a satisfactorily unadorned and detailed description of the O'Neals at dinner, and a surprisingly well defined reflection of the private experience we, as psychologist-researchers, bring to our perceptions of others' lives. The former we offer with the conviction that it can be illuminating and useful to those trying to understand what a family is, while the latter we have tried to learn from personally rather than projecting it on the O'Neals.

What follows is description of the first eight minutes and eight seconds from forty-eight minutes of tape; these early efforts of ours represent work in progress. Our work in getting this far and our goals beyond this we would like to present more comprehensively in another format. In particular we wish to discuss the relationship

between accuracy and sustained readability in describing human relationships behaviorally. We believe an important measure of how well we have succeeded at this early stage in truthfully representing the O'Neal Family is the degree to which the reader is enabled by reading what we have written to visualize and experience their dinnertime. Perhaps concrete description of life relationships carefully enough worked for accuracy and visibility can increase our comprehension of human psychology. These are our beginning efforts.

Many people have helped us see the "O'Neals" and ourselves more clearly. In addition to the family who participated, we wish to thank Drs. Harold L. Raush, Harold Jarmon, and Howard Gadlin for actively supporting our work, sharing its anxieties and satisfactions, and responding to it perceptively and sensitively. Dr. Stuart Golann shared our work equally generously, also helping us to clarify our own understandings of it. Ellie Kurtz edited the manuscript candidly and skillfully, with depth. James L. Williams provided the drawings. We thank many other friends and loved ones for their ideas and encouragement, especially Ester Shapiro and Caleb Baker, and the other members of our families for sharing our work. All generously contributed to that for which we are finally responsible.

Introductory Meeting

Steve and Joanne O'Neal didn't ask many questions about our request to videotape their family at dinner. We explained the record would be used anonymously as research material for our doctoral dissertations in clinical psychology and very likely in a later publication. Our work would be a written description. They responded that they trusted Brian, whom they knew as a friend of Steve's sister.

Steve is thirty and has lived in New England all his life, moving when he was twelve to the town where he and Joanne are now living. Six years ago he received his bachelor's degree from a nearby state university and a year later began his present job teaching retarded children; he was in school and working nights for the first two years of his marriage. Joanne, also thirty, was born in the town where she and Steve live. She attended a different state college from which she received a bachelor's degree eight years ago. Joanne stays home with their two children while Steve commutes to his job twenty miles away. Prior to their marriage she worked for four years in a local factory; following marriage she did part-time tutoring and worked weekend mornings in a coffee shop until two years after the birth of their first child. Their annual income is \$9100.

Joanne is the third in a family of five children, Steve the second

of four. They were married early in 1966 following an engagement of a year and a half. Their children are Greg, seven years and eight months, and Beth, two years and ten months. They own a large hound named Holmes, whom they brought into the family when Greg was a year and a half old.

Our introductory meeting with Steve and Joanne around the dinner table in their apartment followed two phone calls, the first between Brian and Joanne while Steve was out and the second between Brian and Steve, who invited us to visit and talk further about our plans. They were interested in our offer of a hundred dollar participation fee, which they said would help them pay for a forthcoming family vacation. In the course of discussion they and we agreed on a contract guaranteeing their privacy, and they expressed their concern that the record should be authentic. Joanne suggested we start the camera five or ten minutes before the meal to capture the full dinner scene typical in their home. Steve thought the camera might make them self-conscious. We explained there would be at least one trial run to help them become accustomed to the camera and lights. Both were clearly excited about participating and said the children were too. We met Greg and Beth in passing as they wandered in from outdoor play.

We had a beer with Joanne and Steve, who talked with us mostly about things other than the taping such as the Vietnam war and their vacation plans. Then Joanne showed us around their new apartment,

into which they had moved four months earlier. Our tour took us the length of an inexpensively furnished living room connected to the dining room by a wide doorway; up the stairs extending from a hallway and front door at the end of the living room furthest from the dining room; past a bathroom on the right at the top of the staircase and into the bedroom shared by the children. Next door was Steve and Joanne's room. A child's drawing lying on the foot of the bed captured our attention. Joanne explained this was a movie poster copied by Greg, who, like Steve, is interested in old movies. The unfinished poster read, "A Family Affair and Your only young on[ce]7." Next door to Joanne and Steve's room we entered a small third bedroom presently used for storage; we decided we would later set up the video equipment here. Back downstairs, Joanne showed us the second bathroom and kitchen, both adjoining the dining room on the right as one enters from the living room. A back door leads off the kitchen to a grassy area behind the apartment building.

We thanked them, left behind a check, and arranged to return a week later, on August 23, for the trial-run taping and August 24 for a second, working record.



Saturday, August 24, 1974

5:10 p.m.

Two hot television lights on telescoping stands reach almost to the ceiling in the foremost corners of the dining room, casting a golden light off walls and ceiling. A warm evening breeze blows through the back doorway and open windows, stirring floral window curtains drawn closed to cut glare.

A small color-video camera on a tripod in the living room is aimed toward the dining room through the wide entranceway connecting the two rooms. The camera's perspective includes most of the dining room. Finished focusing the camera, Brian waits in the front hall of the O'Neals' apartment while in the storage room upstairs Jeff checks on the monitor to see that the audio- and videotape recorders are running properly. Our plan is to start the taping, then leave for our own dinner while the O'Neals eat theirs.

From the stationary camera-eye perspective being used to describe the O'Neals' dinner, the curtained windows are on the left and far walls of the

dining room. Against the left wall is also a small bookcase filled with books. On the far wall a planter hangs inside the curtains in the center of the window. On the right-hand wall there are two doorways separated by a side table, above which is a wall clock. The door nearest the living room leads to a bathroom. The doorway furthest from living room and camera leads to the kitchen, where Steve and Joanne are preparing for dinner off camera.

In the center of the dining room, beneath a lighted five-globe chandelier, a rectangular, orange-brown maple table is set with four white china plates. Four armless, dark-oak chairs are pulled slightly back from the table. For taping purposes the chairs have been placed two at the left, one on the right, and one at the table's far end, leaving the front end of the table open. A microphone hangs from the chandelier well above eye level of anyone sitting at the table. Now, and throughout much of the taping, the sounds of children playing outdoor games can be heard in the background.

In front and to the left of the table on the woodgrain-tiled floor lies Holmes. A large, short-haired hound with floppy ears and a white spot high on the chest of his brown coat, he looks past the camera toward the front hall with his head tilted to the right and his left ear cocked.

A sharp ringing of glasses comes from Joanne and Steve's work in the kitchen, then Brian says from the front hallway of the apartment,

"Let's go, Jeff." Holmes shakes his ear at the kitchen sounds, lifting it higher when Brian speaks. Brian is waiting by the front door while Jeff hesitates halfway up the stairs.

Joanne walks into the camera's view from the kitchen carrying a butter dish in her right hand, salt and pepper shakers in her left, and a roll of paper towels under her right arm. Looking at the table as she approaches it, she calls out, "Okay, we, we'll see you guys after, huh?" Holmes turns his head slightly toward her as she speaks.

Stopping beside the table, Joanne leans forward and to her left, reaching across with the salt and pepper shakers. Her blouse, an abstract print of yellow and green flowers on silky white fabric, hangs loose in front and is tucked into the rear of knee-length blue denim shorts. She is barefoot. She puts the shakers near the place setting furthest from the head of the table, then pauses as if listening, her hand still on them. Her straight brown hair, parted in the middle and a few inches longer than shoulder length, falls forward to the right of her face and spreads over her left shoulder.

"Okay," Brian answers her from the front hallway.

Taking the butter dish from her right hand and placing it at the table's center, Joanne smiles. Her face is long and oval with dark eyebrows, high cheekbones, and a full-lipped mouth. She straightens up and turns to her left, then looks toward the living room as she steps sideways away from the table. Medium height, broad-shouldered, and

round-hipped, she circles the chair to the table's right on her way toward the living room. "Enjoy your dinner," she calls out as she walks, touching the roll of towels with her left hand and continuing to look in our general direction.

Holmes glances up at Joanne as she passes the end of the table, then looks behind her. She holds her left hand close to her waist and slightly bent at the wrist as, smiling, she tilts her head to the right and looks around the camera. She takes the roll of towels in both hands as she walks into the living room.

Holmes looks after her, turning his head to the front hall and cocking his left ear as Brian asks Jeff, "It looks fine to the left?"

Almost immediately Joanne re-enters the dining room with the paper towels in her right hand, ripping one off as she comes into view and tucking the roll between her right arm and chest. Holmes glances up at her, then looks past her into the living room as she walks toward the right side of the table folding the single towel with both hands.

"Um, go upstairs one more second," Jeff says.

Holmes again looks up at Joanne, then back to the living room as she stops behind the chair to the table's right and faces the table, turning the towel she has folded once. She looks toward the living room as Brian says, "I think it's fine."

Looking down at the towel in her hands, Joanne folds it a second

time, then bends over the chair back and puts the improvised napkin at the place setting there with her left hand. She pushes and pats the napkin into place, looks back at it as she steps sideways toward the far end of the table, then glances down at the roll of towels under her arm. Holmes moves his gaze slowly to the wall beside the kitchen door. Stepping forward to the far corner of the table, Joanne rips off another towel and folds it while she stands with her body partially turned to the living room.

"Boy, this looks like great corn," Steve says from the kitchen behind her.

"Um, I know it," she agrees, folding the napkin in half a second time. She puts it beside the plate at the head of the table and pushes it into place, then takes a last look as she says, "I picked--"

"Where'd you get it?" he cuts in. Holmes peers under the table toward the kitchen.

"--tried to pick out some light ears," Joanne finishes after he does. While she speaks she steps back from the table and half turns to the kitchen, glancing in his direction, then looks at the towels as she tears off another.

"Yeah, they really are, they're nice," Steve says.

"Bye. . . See you later," we call out from the front hall.

Finishing a first fold of the towel, Joanne looks up to the living room and calls, "Yup." She turns the towel in her hands and

glances at it, then faces the table, folding the towel a second time while Holmes shifts his gaze from the kitchen doorway to the wall midway between living room and kitchen.

"Enjoy your dinner," Joanne says again. She leans across the table as she finishes speaking and slides the napkin in beside the plate to the right of the table's head, then glances at the place setting next to it and reaches with her left hand for another towel.

"Thanks," Jeff says from the front hall. Holmes sharply turns his head to the hall and lifts his muzzle while Joanne takes a step back from the table and looks at the roll of towels, tearing off another and sticking the roll under her right arm. Stepping beside the chair to the table's right, she leans forward against the table edge and looks down as she folds the napkin once. Her work is accompanied by banging noise in the kitchen and the sound of the front door closing. Holmes stares toward the front hall as the door closes.

Joanne leans further over the table, slides a napkin beside the last plate, and readjusts it twice with her fingers. With a last look over her shoulder she steps back and turns away. She takes the roll of towels in both hands as she enters the kitchen.



5:10:45

In the kitchen, where both Joanne and Steve are, a lot of objects are being moved about. A cupboard door slams shut.

"So, they even got Holmes last night," Joanne says. Holmes turns his head toward the kitchen at the sound of his name.

"What do I put this corn into?" Steve overlaps, followed by more clattering.

"Isn't there any plastic bowl?" Joanne asks.

Holmes looks toward the front room while Steve mutters, "Yes, let's see. . . ." The clattering and banging increases, then stops and a cupboard door slams.

"They got Holmes last night," repeats Joanne.

As Holmes turns his head back to the kitchen, Steve again speaks over Joanne, talking rapidly and confusedly. "You don't want to eat too much, you want to go out and finish this one here," he says, "because" -- Joanne walks into the dining room, looking at the table and carrying silverware in both hands -- "it's

going to be a long time now since you wanted it ready, isn't it?" he finishes.

Holmes turns his head toward the wall as Joanne stops at the head of the table and with her right hand places a fork beside the plate there, then with both hands slides plate, napkin, and fork slightly to the right. Taking a deep breath as Steve finishes speaking, she distractedly asks, "What's that?" She begins to put down a knife but hesitates, holding it close to the table and half turning her head toward the kitchen as Steve replies.

"This corn -- I mean this hamburger," he says.

Lifting the knife slightly, Joanne drops it clattering beside the plate, then looks up at him through the kitchen door and takes another knife from her left hand as he continues speaking.

"Never even took -- it isn't even started already," Steve says, walking into the dining room with a bowl of cooked corn in his left hand.

Joanne looks back at the table, then steps sideways to her left and leans across his path to the place setting at the table's right. Placing a fork there and adjusting the napkin with her left hand, she says without looking up, "No, it's not going to start that now -- you know, it won't take long." In mid-sentence she places the knife from her right hand beside the plate and brings her left arm back out of his way.

"Where's Greg?" he asks before she finishes speaking, stopping behind the chair to her left and reaching around her to put the bowl of corn down near the head of the table. His right foot comes off the floor and he extends his right arm behind him for balance as he leans sideways over the chair back. Broadly built, Steve wears a horizontally striped pullover shirt with sleeves that come to his elbows. He is moderately heavy around the waist where his shirt hangs outside rumpled pants.

As he places the corn down, Joanne steps back to the end of the table and takes a fork from her left hand. Looking at the place setting to the right of the table's head, she says, "I think he was upstairs." Footsteps sound on the floor above while Joanne speaks. Holmes looks to the living room.

Reaching across the table, she places the fork down while Steve steps back from the table and strides toward the living room to call Greg. His wavy brown, collar-length hair falls over the right side of his forehead. Thick eyebrows, deep-set eyes, and a puffy nose; a full mustache turning down at the corners of his mouth; and a broad, somewhat jowly face give him the expression of a young man both boyish and serious. Tugging his shirt down and raising his voice as he walks toward the living room, he calls, "Hey, Greg?" and lowers his arms to his sides.

Holmes looks up at Steve, then past him to the living room again while

Joanne, standing at the far end of the table, glances down and takes another fork from her left hand, then reaches over the table and places it beside the plate second from the table's head.

"What?" Greg asks from somewhere in the apartment.

"Come on and eat some corn. It's nice and hot," Steve calls back, turning away from the living room in unbroken motion and walking back toward the kitchen while Joanne steps away from the table and looks it over, rubbing the left side of her mouth with her right hand. "Yup," she says, turning to her left and preceding Steve into the kitchen.

"Okay," Greg says eagerly, his rapid footsteps sounding on the stairs.

"Hey, Beth," calls Joanne while walking to the kitchen. Holmes turns his head. "Beth, you want some corn?" Steve calls out from a few steps behind Joanne, tugging his shirt down at his left side.

"No," Beth whines from the backyard. Holmes, still lying on the floor in front of the table, glances toward the living room where Greg is entering, then back to the kitchen door as Beth protests.

Barefoot, in hiking shorts and a long-sleeved pullover shirt, Greg comes downstairs to eat dinner. Greg is stocky like Steve and Joanne. His dirty-blond, wavy hair covers his ears. Approaching the table from the living room and looking it over, he tugs his shorts up in front with both hands.

"Corn--," Joanne calls to Beth from the kitchen, stopping as Steve exclaims, "Corn -- corn on the cob!"

"No," says Beth.

Greg slows and stops at the open end of the dining room table, his back to the living room, as Steve continues more urgently to Beth from the kitchen, "Come on, 'cause we want to get to the drive-in." Greg leans his left forearm on the corner, looking toward the bowl of corn. Holmes continues to look past him into the kitchen.

Walking in from the kitchen and looking at the head of the table, Joanne busily says, "Yeah, hurry up, Greg." Holmes looks off toward the front room while Joanne points with her right index finger to the chair opposite her and beside the table's head. Ducking his head to the right as she points, Greg wipes his forehead with his right sleeve, then looks up at her and takes a step back from the table, dropping his arms to his sides.

The screen door in the kitchen bangs shut as Beth comes inside. Holmes turns his attention from the living room at the sound of the door and makes moves to stand as Joanne stops at the far end of the table opposite Greg. Bringing her pointing finger to her mouth, she turns to Greg and licks it.

"Come on," Steve continues in the kitchen more matter-of-factly.

"We gotta eat so we can get to the drive-in."

Greg comes almost to Joanne's shoulders. Turning away as she

looks at him, he quickly heads around the table in the direction she has pointed. Just then Holmes rises and walks between Greg and the table legs, headed in the direction of the kitchen. Greg slows up and moves around Holmes, his right hand lingering on the table corner where he had been leaning. He looks at the chair closest to him on the left side of the table and drops his right hand. Taking her hand from her mouth and stepping sideways to her left at the same time Greg heads around the opposite end of the table away from her, Joanne walks the length of the table toward the living room, looking past him. Glancing down, she places her hand on the chair back to the right of the table as she steps around Holmes, who brushes the backs of her legs on his way to the kitchen.

"I want, " Beth interrupts the end of Steve's matter-of-fact statement.

"See 'Dumbo'. . . , " Steve says temptingly before she finishes.

Holmes leaves the dining room for the kitchen while Greg stops at the front chair on the left and looks down the table to the bowl of corn, taking hold of the table end with his right hand. Glancing at the place setting in front of him, then back at the cornbowl, he slides onto the chair as Joanne slows at the threshold between dining room and living room. Biting her lower lip, she peers around the camera, then continues into the living room.

"I want something wet, Daddy, " Beth says in the kitchen.

Gripping the table end, Greg straddles the outside corner of the seat he has chosen and tilts his head to the right as he reaches out with his left hand to the cornbowl at the far end of the table.

"All right, yeah," Steve distractedly overlaps Beth, "you can have something wet." Greg touches the hot corn three times and lifts his hand away. "What do you want?"

"Chocolate milk."

Sitting up, Greg takes hold of the table edge to the left of his plate and glances at the chair to his left, then looks back at the cornbowl and becomes still as Joanne approaches from the front room. "Hey, you know what?" she asks as she passes the camera. With her right arm swinging at her side and her left bent at the elbow, she walks into the dining room looking toward the kitchen. "Last night this thing--"

"You want chocolate milk or you want soda?" Steve asks Beth.

Holding onto the table edge in front of him with both hands, Greg looks up at Joanne, who looks toward him and away as she trails off from speaking, then at him again, slowing in her progress to the kitchen. Sitting on the edge of his seat with his right foot on the floor beside his chair, Greg turns his shaggy-banged, brown-eyed, full-cheeked face to follow her slowing motion. She stops at the table corner across from him and turns in his direction, pointing her left index finger at his face. "Go wash up, Greg," she says annoyedly,

pointing.

"Soda," says Beth at the same time Joanne speaks to Greg.

"Okay," says Steve.

Greg ducks his head and wipes his mouth with the forearm of his right sleeve, watching Joanne. "You look all sticky and icky," Joanne chides, lingering over the words. Shifting from one foot to another and edging toward the kitchen as she speaks, she points from his face to his hands.

"Yeah, Greg, go wash up," Steve overlaps her from the kitchen.

Pushing down on the table with both palms and looking at the floor, Greg stands as Joanne and Steve finish speaking to him. He catches his left foot between the table and chair, pausing briefly to extricate it while he looks down at his right hand, turning up his palm and spreading out his fingers. Closing his hand into a fist, he struggles from between table and chair, then pushes his chair back noisily and trips as he frees his leg. Recovering, he looks up at Joanne to his left while he walks in a wide half circle around her to the bathroom, his arms swinging at his sides and his hands fisted.

"Yup. . .," Steve says to Beth in the kitchen.

"Go!" Joanne tells Greg, and snaps the fingers of her lowered right hand as he trips. Still pointing with her left index finger, she follows his passage around her and into the bathroom.

". . .take a glass here," Steve tells Beth as he walks back into

the dining room twisting the cap off a huge, sixty-four ounce bottle of Coke.

"Yeah. . .," Joanne says firmly, turning away from Greg to Steve, who has come in behind her. ". . .and wash your face too, will ya?" she adds over her shoulder to Greg, who has left the room. She walks toward Steve while he leans over the table. Putting the soda bottle beside the plate at the table's head and placing the cap down next to it, he turns away from the table toward Joanne. They look at each other as they turn to the kitchen, then Joanne brushes past him, going first. Putting his right hand on his belly as he makes way for her, Steve loudly belches, then lowers his head and lifts his right fist to his mouth as he follows a few feet behind her into the kitchen.

Water runs in the bathroom, where Greg has gone to wash.



5:11:50

Holmes enters the dining room as Joanne and Steve leave and walks under the windows along the far wall toward his bowl in the corner. Beth wanders in barefoot just after him and walks toward the table with her right hand to her mouth and her head turned to the living room. Her golden hair, which curls at her shoulders, falls across her forehead in a wave accentuating her large blue eyes. She wears a simple green dress trimmed in white and cut above her knees. She looks ahead of her with her fingers still in her mouth and continues uncertainly toward the table as Holmes reaches the room's far left corner and puts his snout in his bowl. Stopping a few feet from the table, Beth turns to her right toward the kitchen where Joanne and Steve are working.

Lifting his head from his bowl, Holmes turns around to his left as Beth turns away from the kitchen. Staggering backward a step and recovering, Beth lowers her hand from her mouth and makes her way toward the table again. Looking across to the chairs on the opposite

side, she bumps into the table edge with her chest, rebounds, and walks unsteadily to her right as Holmes sniffs the table edge opposite her and turns away to his left. Tail wagging, Holmes heads around the far end of the table toward the kitchen as Beth comes around from her side moving in the other direction.

In the bathroom the water goes off.

Looking down and moving quickly behind the chair at the table's head, Beth passes to Holmes' left on his way to the kitchen. She walks with a toddling gait as she comes around the far left corner of the table looking ahead of her at the nearest chair.

"I want to go to the drive-in," Steve stage whispers excitedly from the kitchen.

Placing her left hand on the table corner and her right on the chair seat, Beth begins to climb onto the chair. She turns her head to the kitchen, lifts her left knee onto the seat, and pulls herself up as Steve walks rapidly in from the kitchen carrying a glass in each hand. He passes to the left of Holmes, who turns before the kitchen doorway and walks toward the living room with his tail wagging.

"What did you say?" Greg calls loudly from the bathroom. "All right," Joanne simultaneously says from the kitchen.

Steve stops to the left of the chair at the head of the table and places both glasses to the right of the place setting there. Holding the table corner with her left hand as she pulls both knees onto the

chair, Beth straightens up and looks at the glasses he has set down.

"What did you say, Mom?" Greg asks again, walking out of the bathroom.

"I said I want to get to that drive-in," Steve answers before Greg finishes, bending to his left and lifting the Coke bottle in both hands.

Working her way to a standing position on the chair seat as Steve begins pouring soda, Beth glances at Greg coming out of the bathroom. He strides across the room toward his chair, looking down the table's length in her direction, while she looks down at her feet. Crossing in front of Holmes, who is walking toward the living room, and continuing to watch Beth, Greg places his right hand on the corner of the table beside the chair he had chosen earlier and says, "I know, but Mommy, what did you say?" As he finishes his question and half turns away from Beth to the kitchen, Beth stands on the chair seat to Steve's right and balances with her left hand, grasping the chair back with her right and looking at her feet while she totters across the seat in Greg's direction.

"I said wash your face, because you look all hot," Joanne calls back from the kitchen.

Placing her left, then her right foot on the chair seat beside Greg while Joanne answers him, Beth faces the table and looks down at the place setting in front of her.

"I know, I know," Greg loudly interrupts Joanne. Looking down

at Beth's bare feet as he slips between chair and table, he continues, "But what did you say before that?" then looks past Beth and sits on her feet with a grinding motion of his buttocks.

"No!" Beth yells. Looking at her feet, she retreats sideways back to the chair at her left, then indignantly looks down at Greg while behind her at the head of the table Steve continues pouring soda.

Gripping the table end with his right hand, Greg slides further onto the chair and looks toward Beth. "You sit there and you'll get dinner," he says, lowering his voice as he glances from Beth to Joanne entering from the kitchen, then back again to Beth, pulling his right leg after him between the chair and table.

"No!" Beth whines loudly while Greg speaks, turning to the plate in front of her, then back to him.

Steve rests the bottle on the table between his place setting and Joanne's and holds it with his left hand while he glances at Greg and Beth. Looking back down as Joanne approaches from behind him, he reaches with his right hand toward the glass he's been pouring into and waits for the foam to go down, then lifts the bottle again with both hands and resumes pouring as Joanne speaks.

"All right, kids. . .," she says, walking up to the table. She placates with her right hand and holds her left loosely fisted in front of her as she stops behind her chair and surveys the scene between Beth and Greg. Beth stands on the chair seat to Greg's left

indignantly looking down at him. Greg looks up at Beth as he grips the table corner with his right hand and holds onto the table edge to his left, sliding himself forward in the chair. While Joanne watches, he looks away from Beth to Steve pouring soda and rests his left wrist against the table edge.

Turning her right hand palm-up, Joanne looks at Beth. "You guys can switch chairs," she reasons. "You don't have to sit in the same--." Her voice dissolves into doubt even before Beth yells, "Eh! Uh! No!" and flails at Greg with her right hand. Joanne turns to Greg, who stares up at Beth while Beth touches her right hand to the back of the chair she stands on and glares down at him.

Coming in from the front room with his tail swinging, Holmes walks toward Greg and Beth's side of the table while Joanne shifts from her left to her right foot and looks from Greg to Beth and again to Greg as she puts both hands on the back of her chair. Greg and Beth confront each other unwaveringly while Joanne fidgets. Then with a rotating motion of her left hand Joanne tells Greg to move to his left, saying at the same time, "Aw, Greg, come on."

Holmes sniffs beneath the contested chair and walks on toward his bowl as Joanne speaks.

"Why do you have to have the same chair?" Steve overlaps Joanne, lifting his head only slightly and laughing. Filling the first glass as he finishes speaking, he puts down the Coke bottle to the

right of the glasses.

With both hands on the back of her chair, Joanne watches Greg stand up between the chair and table as Steve speaks. Hugging the table edge and looking down in front of him, Greg reaches for the far corner and pulls himself over while Beth supports herself with her right hand on the chair backs and walks across the seats behind him, watchful of her footing. Steve leans his right palm on the table edge while the exchange takes place and reaches down the table with the full glass of soda toward the place setting now belonging to Beth.

Holding the table corner with his left hand as he sits between Steve and Beth, Greg looks back at the chair Beth is taking. "Rats," he says quietly, and looks forward at the Coke bottle.

As he places the glass of soda in front of the place setting just vacated by Greg and reaches back for the bottle, Steve looks at Greg and says, "Has it got your name on it?" Lifting the bottle in both hands as he finishes speaking, he looks down and pours into the second glass.

Beth stoops and bends forward as Steve speaks, resting her hands on the table edge to either side of her plate and lowering first her left leg then her right in front of her chair, sitting. As she gets her right leg fully under, she turns to Greg, who is looking rapidly back and forth between his empty glass and her full one. Behind Greg, in the corner of the room, Holmes lowers his head to his bowl.

Joanne, who has watched the children change seats, lifts her right hand off the back of her chair and pushes her hair away from her right temple. She glances at Greg and Steve, then looks at Beth and moves uncertainly around to the left of her own chair. Leaning against the table and bending forward, she reaches out her left hand for Beth's plate, then looks down the table and reaches with her right to the cornbowl as she pulls Beth's plate a few inches closer. "Here, want me -- Mommy to fix your corn?" she asks.

Beth glances from Greg to her plate, then reaches with her left hand for her glass and watches Joanne stretch to the cornbowl. Greg meanwhile turns away from Steve's pouring to look at Beth's plate, then looking from her plate to her, pipes up, "That's Jamaica corn." While Holmes leaves his bowl and walks behind Steve's chair toward the kitchen, Greg continues to watch Beth, who takes her glass in both hands and looks over it at Joanne transferring an ear of corn from bowl to plate.

"Do you want to try to fix your own, Greg?" asks Steve, continuing to pour soda. He stops pouring and puts the bottle between his and Joanne's plates.

"What?" Greg asks distractedly as he turns to his left and wraps his left hand around his glass. He leans forward and looks from the glass in his left hand brimming with foam to Steve's right hand as Steve removes it from the Coke bottle and reaches to the cornbowl.

Still bending over the table, Joanne looks back at her place setting and touches her left hand to her napkin while she searches with her right hand for her knife.

"Your own corn?" asks Steve, studying the cornbowl as he picks out an ear for Greg. Holmes comes around the table behind and to Steve's left and looks up at Steve's hand.

"Yeah," says Greg, nodding and leaning forward a little more, still holding onto his glass.

Holmes looks off to the kitchen and licks his chops as Steve pulls an ear of corn from the bowl. "Here's a" -- Steve drops the corn back in the bowl and retrieves it -- "nice light ear," he says, transferring it quickly to Greg's plate just as Greg overlaps, "Can I have a little more soda?"

"This is really hot," Joanne breaks in as she picks up her knife and looks down from right to left, reaching with her left hand first toward Beth's corn and then for the butter dish. Beth drinks soda from the glass she holds in both hands while over the lip she watches Joanne sliding the butter dish to the right and placing a knife in the butter.

As Joanne takes butter for Beth's corn, Steve picks up the Coke bottle in both hands and again tilts it to Greg's glass. Nodding, he says patiently to Greg, "Yes, I, I wanted the foam to go down." Greg leans forward with his left hand on his glass and looks on fixedly while

Steve pours.

Bent over the table from the left of her chair, Joanne turns to Beth's plate with a knifeful of butter as Steve begins pouring for Greg. Beth watches Joanne and sucks soda from her glass.

"Go ahead, you can fix your own corn," Steve tells Greg without looking up from pouring.

Holmes looks back toward the table while Steve speaks, then slowly walks to a spot behind Joanne's chair. Sitting back without removing his hand from his glass, Greg glances back and forth at his place setting, then looks across the table while he reaches with his right hand across his plate for his fork.

"Here, Beth," Joanne sighs, and butters more rapidly.

Taking his fork in his right hand and raising it prongs-up between him and Beth, Greg searches for the butter. Beth meanwhile takes her glass from her mouth and looks at her plate, then still holding her glass she turns her head sharply and looks at the fork beside her left ear.

Catching sight of the butter, Greg waggles his fork as if to throw it like a dart and leans forward to his right, stretching his right arm over the table without taking his left hand off his glass. Finished filling the glass Greg holds gripped in his hand, Steve puts down the soda bottle between his own plate and Joanne's and straightens up. Holmes lies down a few feet behind Joanne's chair with his hind legs

and tail toward the table while Beth cranes her neck watching Greg's fork enter the butter. Setting down her glass with both hands, she again looks at Greg's fork and grunts, "Nnnnnnh."

Steve picks up the cap in his right hand and begins screwing it on the bottle while Joanne turns without letting go of Beth's corn and takes more butter. Joanne's knife shares the butter dish with Greg's fork.

"Nnnnnnnh," Beth grunts a second time, and looks from the butter dish to her glass, then switches from glass to plate with her right hand and says, "Um-buh. . . ."

Sitting up as he secures butter, Greg lets go of his glass, grasps his corn in his left hand, and begins buttering with his fork. He's absorbed in the task as Joanne takes her knife from the butter dish. Glancing from Steve to Greg, then back down, she puts more butter on Beth's corn while Beth lurches forward in her chair and turns from her own corn to Greg's. "I didn't give him a knife, Steve," Joanne says tiredly. Holmes lowers his head to the floor, his nose pointed toward the front room.

"I want a little bit," Beth interrupts Joanne, turning her whole body toward Greg with her right foot touching the floor, her right arm flat on the table, and the right side of her chest pressed against the table edge while Greg butters his corn with his fork.

Holding onto the neck of the soda bottle with his left hand, Steve

picks up his knife from his plate as Joanne, still buttering, says over Beth, "He's fixing his own corn and he needs--." She glances to her right and reaches for more butter as Steve breaks in.

"Here, Greg, have the knife," he says, reaching over and dropping his own knife rattling on Greg's plate, then turns to his left and lifts the Coke bottle against his chest, his left hand around the neck and his right underneath. "It's a lot better, I'll get another knife," he adds, continuing to turn to the kitchen while behind him Greg grabs the knife in his left hand without looking up from his plate. Greg puts down his fork and transfers the knife from his left hand to his right. The knifeblade catches light as Steve stops in mid-step halfway to the kitchen and pauses, his left foot crossed in front of his right. Looking to his right, he steps between the back of Joanne's chair and Holmes. Greg, meanwhile, holds his corn in his left hand and uses his knife to scoop butter. Reaching out with his left arm and leaning sideways, Steve lifts his right foot off the floor as he places the bottle on the side table behind Joanne. Without looking at Greg he steps back from the side table, walking carefully around Holmes' hind legs and tail into the kitchen. Greg spreads butter on his corn.

Joanne glances to her plate, then back at Beth's without interrupting her buttering. "Okay," she murmurs as Steve leaves the room. Giving the corn a few more swipes and looking again at her own place setting, she reaches out and puts her knife on the edge of

her plate without letting go of Beth's corn. Beth continues to watch Greg, who gingerly touches his hot corn with his left hand as he butters with his right.

"Now be careful of this, Beth, 'cause it's hot," Joanne cautions, her voice wavering on Beth's name as she turns back to Beth's corn and picks up the salt shaker. Beth turns forward and brings her right hand to her mouth, resting her right upper arm and elbow on the table and watching her mother salt.

"Sure is," Greg says knowingly, scooping butter off his plate and slopping it on his corn while he holds his left hand a cool distance away.

Fidgeting in her chair and rubbing her mouth on the back of her hand, Beth kicks her left leg as she watches Joanne turn and salt her corn. "Mom-my. . .," she says plaintively.

Joanne stops salting and pushes the plate partially toward her, saying busily, "Here you go." With her hand still to her mouth, Beth looks up at Joanne's face, then lowers her eyes as Joanne looks at her. With the salt in her right hand and the plate in her left, Joanne says sharply, "Are you clean? Let me see your hands." Her tone of voice is playful but demands Beth's attention. Meanwhile she withholds the corn.

Greg glances quickly at Joanne, then reaches toward the butter plate with his knife. Beth looks promptly up at Joanne, raises her right hand, and spreads her fingers. Taking Beth's right hand in her

left, Joanne briskly turns it back and inspects the palm, then releases it and says conditionally, "All right." Beth continues to stare up at Joanne's face after her hand is released, then looks down and presses the hand against her nose while Joanne moves her plate closer to her and stops where Beth's glass stands in the way. Joanne puts the salt next to the butter dish, then reaches for Beth's glass with her right hand, saying again, "Here you go."

In the kitchen Steve begins whistling a tune.

Bringing back butter on his knife, Greg butters his corn as Joanne lifts Beth's glass and moves it out of danger away from the edge of the table. While Joanne moves Beth's napkin to the left and slides the plate into position, Beth's right hand slips from her nose and she pokes herself in the right eye. "Use your napkins too, instead of letting it run down your hands," Joanne says sharply to both Greg and Beth. As Joanne speaks, Beth returns her hand to her nose and looks at her plate, then turns toward the front room, jerkily swinging her right leg and interrupting, "Ah, I. . ." She stops swinging her leg, puts her fingers in her mouth, and again looks up at Joanne. "I want a knife," she says in a sing-song voice.

Holding her buttery hands in front of her, Joanne looks down the table toward Greg, who is chasing butter around his plate, holding his knife perpendicular to the plate's surface. While Beth asks for a knife, Joanne looks at the table in front of her and pushes the salt up

against the pepper with the back of her left hand, then grabs both shakers in her right hand, reaches down the table with them, and puts them between Steve's plate and Greg's. Looking toward Steve's place setting, she straightens up and takes two steps away from the table, then turns back to Greg. Greg's left forearm rests against the table edge and he holds his hand away from his corn. He rolls his corn back and forth in butter with his knife, which rings against his plate.

Swinging her right leg while she continues to look up at Joanne, Beth says, "I want. . .," then looks at Greg's noisy struggle with the corn as Joanne puts down the salt and pepper shakers. Taking her fingers from her mouth and twisting around to her right, she waves her arms in the air, whining, "I don't, huh, uh. . .," then pumping her right leg up and down and placing her right hand on the table corner, she comes back to a full sitting position facing the living room. "I don't wanna," she says, and pauses as if something has caught her attention.

"Greg," Joanne says over Beth. Stepping toward him, she moves her right hand rapidly from the wrist, instructing him, "Go back and forth over it."

"I don't wanna eat," Beth continues, twisting back to her left and pressing her chest against the table edge while Joanne speaks to Greg.

Steve stops whistling in the kitchen and Beth turns her head

sharply to the front room while Joanne, holding her hands in front of her and watching Greg, walks behind her chair toward him. Stepping over Holmes' hind legs, she turns and leans over the table, extending both hands to Greg's plate. "To -- here, like this. . .," she tells him, while he drops his knife rattling on the right side of his plate and grabs his corn with both hands, ready to roll it in butter. Taking his knife from his plate with her left hand and reaching to touch the backs of his hands with her right, she says, "Watch, watch." Letting go of his corn, Greg pulls his hands back and slumps into his chair, then rests his left forearm against the table edge as his right hand retreats to his lap and he looks at his plate. Transferring his knife to her right hand and lifting one end of his corn with her left, she demonstrates how to scoop butter off the plate and begins spreading butter on his corn.

Beth continues staring toward the living room while she grips the table edge with both hands and slowly swings her right leg, then holding her leg still she turns to Joanne and says, "I want to see who at the--"

Steve walks in from the kitchen with a can of beer in his left hand and a table knife in his right, just as the doorbell rings.



5:13:22

"I want--," says Beth, clutching the table with both hands and leaning toward Joanne.

"Oh, I bet that's that kid again," Joanne says, shaking her head while she leans across the table and butters Greg's corn.

Pausing at the table, Steve reaches sideways to Joanne's right and glances at Greg's plate as he puts down his can of beer, then continues around and behind Joanne toward the front room while she speaks. In his left hand he carries another table knife. Stepping over Holmes' hind legs and wiping beer can condensate off his right hand onto his shirttail, he says with a laugh, "I'll bet you it is too." Lifting his arm over the back of Joanne's empty chair, he again wipes his hand on his shirt as he continues past the table into the living room.

Still leaning toward Joanne, Beth says, "Um--," while Holmes gets up, tail wagging, and trails Steve out of the room.

Greg doesn't look up at the sound of the doorbell or as Steve passes through the dining room, but sits with his left arm on the table

and his right hand in his lap, fixedly watching Joanne butter his corn.

"I'll kill him," Joanne says exasperatedly over the end of Steve's words.

Beth watches Steve's movement past the table into the living room.

"What kid?" she asks, looking out toward the living room.

"Lew-is," Joanne answers in a mockingly precious voice, continuing scooping butter off Greg's plate and buttering his corn faster than before while Greg looks on and Steve answers the door.

"Oh," Beth says mooningly, turning back toward the table and gently swinging her right leg. "He's Tulis." She looks thoughtfully at her glass while Greg sits up and looks past her into the front room, listening. "I love, uh, Tulis," says Beth. Reaching with her left hand for her glass while she speaks, she bumps her forearm against the table edge and glances at Greg, who is looking past her. Turning forward again, she grips the table corner with her right hand and extends her left arm fully to her glass. As she lifts it she turns her face up to the right, twice brushing her hair back with her right hand. Holding her glass in both hands, she rocks back and forth once, then drinks as Steve speaks in the front hall loudly enough for the family to hear.

"Greg is eating supper," he tells the caller at the front door.

Finished buttering Greg's corn, Joanne rests his knife on his plate and pauses with her right hand on the knife and her left suspended

over the table as from outside the front door the caller says something to Steve in reply. "Uh huh," Steve says, then closes the front door.

Greg looks at his corn as Joanne, taking a step back from the table, picks up the salt shaker with her right hand from in front of Steve's plate. "Just like your mommy, kid," she says. Bending forward, she leans against the table edge and begins salting Greg's corn with her right hand while she turns it with her left.

"Right," calls Steve from the front room.

"It was, huh?" Joanne calls back over Greg's head, continuing to salt his corn while he looks on.

"Um hm," confirms Steve.

Shaking her head and salting, she catches him in the periphery of her vision and says, "Oh, that kid."

"Is he a CIA agent, do you know?" Steve asks Greg, speaking over Joanne as he walks into the dining room with the table knife now in his left hand by his side. Walking toward the table, he raises his right hand to his head as Greg looks up to the right at him. "Wha. . . ?" Greg asks interestedly.

Still drinking, Beth alternately raises her eyes to the scene in front of her and gazes into the glass she holds in both hands.

Joanne lets go of Greg's corn and puts down the salt shaker before Steve reaches the table. "I'll be here at--," she begins, and looks up at Greg. Steve again speaks to Greg as he walks toward his chair.

"Is he an agent of the FBI or the CIA. . ."

As Joanne, interrupting her speech, looks up and Steve walks behind her, Greg looks down at his plate and moves his knife over with his left hand, then takes hold of his corn, leaving his right hand in his lap. Holmes, who has followed Steve into the room, stops at the right front corner of the table, wags his tail, and sniffs with his nose over the table edge.

Straightening up, Joanne looks at the table while she pushes her hair back with her right hand. Looking to the left of her plate, she shakes her head and raises her voice as she continues over Steve, "I couldn't believe this morning. . ." Pausing, she holds her right hand close to her body in front of her at shoulder height and wipes the fingers of her left hand on the napkin beside her plate as she looks across at Greg, who is holding his corn and looking up to his left at Steve. ". . .or something like that?" Steve finishes. Taking hold of the back of his chair and pulling it further out from the table, he glances down at Greg. "What?" Greg asks again, looking up at Steve's face.

"I should be here about ten-thirty. . .," Joanne repeats loudly, emphatically nodding her head at Greg with each syllable. "Lew-is," Steve replies with mock preciousness at the same time in answer to Greg. Facing forward and sitting down as he finishes speaking, Steve grits his teeth and pulls his chair underneath him with his hands on either

side of the seat. Holmes looks from Joanne to Steve and walks behind Joanne's chair toward the far end of the table. "Why? What do you mean?" Greg asks, also while Joanne is speaking, his eyes fixed on Steve's face.

Still looking at Greg, Joanne takes her hand from her napkin, then glances over the table as she turns to her left toward the kitchen. Steve meanwhile shakes his head back and forth and reaches for the cornbowl with his right hand. "Oh, he's unbelievable, Greg," he says. He glances once more at Greg as he finishes speaking, then back to the bowl where he searches for an ear of corn.

Holmes passes behind Steve's chair as Joanne, on her way to the kitchen, says loudly, "He's here on ten-thirty. . .," at the same time Steve speaks to Greg, then pauses in her speech as she walks into the kitchen. Beth, her glass to her lips, glances over its rim at Joanne and rocks very slightly in her seat.

Greg, who hasn't taken his eyes from Steve's face since Steve sat down, raises his voice as Joanne pauses and asks excitedly, "He is?"

"Yes," Steve replies, rejecting the ear of corn he had picked out and looking for another.

"How did you know, maybe we were playing FBI?" Greg interrupts, nodding his head excitedly and practically shouting.

Holmes rounds the corner of the table and walks behind Greg,

continuing his circuit. ". . .absolutely on the dot!" Joanne finishes from the kitchen while Greg is speaking.

Beth puts down her glass with both hands and glances toward the kitchen as Greg finishes speaking to Steve, then looks at her plate. Leaning forward, she places both hands between her chest and the table edge and takes a deep breath.

Laying a large ear of corn on his plate with his right hand, Steve moves his can of beer aside with his left and reaches out with his knife for the butter dish in front of Joanne's plate. As he reaches, he raises his eyebrows at Greg and nods, saying confidentially from the right side of his mouth, "Oh, I believe he is really a member of the FBI."

Beth glances at Steve, then back at her plate while he speaks. She begins to reach with her right hand for her corn but pulls away, pushing her hair back instead.

Looking at his plate as Steve glances his way, Greg picks up his corn in both hands and leans his forearms against the table edge. "Not pretend. . .," Steve continues dramatically, putting his knife in the butter.

"I don't--," Beth says at the same time, leaning forward on her right elbow as she looks down the table at Steve.

". . .for real," Steve finishes. Beth looks at her corn again and leans her cheek against her palm while Holmes turns around at the

front end of the table and walks to the right of her chair. Scooping some butter from the butter dish with his knife as he finishes speaking, Steve leans back and looks at his corn, adjusting it with his right hand.

"Why?" Greg asks, leaning forward and blowing on his corn between bites.

"--like corn," Beth whimpers, leaning more heavily on her palm and grabbing a handful of her hair as she turns from her corn to Steve. Holmes turns in a half circle and settles beside Beth's chair with his back to her.

Shaking his head slowly and sighing, Steve continues to turn and butter his corn. "Because he's always there," he says mysteriously, speaking while Beth does.

"I don't like corn," Beth repeats as she rubs her head and looks from Steve to her plate, then back at him.

"Whenever you turn around," Steve continues over her to Greg, dwelling on each word. Finishing four successive bites, Greg drops his corn on his plate and sits back. Reaching with his left hand for his soda glass, he turns to Beth and wipes his right hand on the thigh of his shorts.

"I don't like corn," Beth says even more emphatically than before, looking again from Steve to her corn and back, then leans her head on her right hand.

Greg turns away from Beth and lifts his glass, glances at Steve,

then drinks. Raising his head and looking briefly up from his buttering, Steve carefully spaces his words as he asks Beth, "Since when don't you like corn?"



5:14:12

"Since when?" Joanne echoes, overlapping the tail end of Steve's question as she walks in from the kitchen, then adds, "That's two nights in a row."

Beth glances rapidly from Steve, to her corn, to Joanne, and back to her corn, then leans far to her right away from both of them and again looks at her corn. Straightening up slightly and turning back to Steve, then leaning her head on her hand again and lifting and dropping her right leg, she says in a sing-song, "I don't like corn."

"You don't like anything any more it seems," Steve says over her without looking up from his buttering.

Joanne carries a frying pan in her left hand and a butter knife in her right. Leaning over the back of her chair as Steve speaks, she takes butter with the knife, holding the frying pan over the table.

"I'll have some --," Beth says, rubbing her head against her right palm as she watches the frying pan and butter knife in front of her.

"All right, Mommy will eat your corn," Joanne breaks in. Greg stops drinking and looks across at Joanne, who scrapes butter onto the pan edge while she looks again at the butter dish, stepping back from the table and half turning to her left toward the kitchen.

Staring at the frying pan as Joanne scrapes butter into it, Beth implores, "Hey, Mommy, can I have some of that?" She pushes her plate toward Joanne with her right hand, raising her voice frenetically as Joanne turns toward the kitchen.

"Yeah, but I'm afraid you're eating too much sweets," Steve says before she finishes, then stops buttering and reaches with his knife for the butter dish. Stopping behind and beside her chair, Joanne steps sideways to the table at Steve's left while he's speaking, then takes more butter on her knife at the same time he does.

Greg puts down his glass while Steve is speaking and glances at Beth's plate, placing both hands on his corn. Leaning forward, gripping the table edge with her left hand and holding her plate with her right, Beth watches both knives entering the butter in unison and cries out something unclear.

"Is that what it is, do you think?" Joanne asks Steve over Beth. She looks from the butter dish to the frying pan in her left hand as she finishes her question, and scrapes the butter onto its edge. Turning to her left again, she walks into the kitchen while Steve brings his knife back to his plate and shrugs, shaking his head. "I don't

know," he says, buttering his corn.

Greg and Beth both shout at once while Steve is speaking. Sitting back from the table and lifting his corn almost to his mouth, Greg interjects, "I'll eat it," then bites into his corn. Beth reaches her right arm toward Joanne's retreating back and yells, "I'll eat it, Mom," then stretches her arm further out and points at the butter dish with her forefinger, looking from Joanne to the butter as she calls, "I want a piece of butter on my plate." She glances at Steve as she brings her arm back, then leans her chin on her right forearm between the table edge and her plate and stares toward the butter dish.

Greg finishes three bites as Beth stops speaking, then leans his forearms against the table edge and looks at Steve's plate where Steve butters his corn.

"Did she get salt and everything on it?" Steve asks Joanne without looking up.

"I want a piece of butter on my--," repeats Beth, kicking her left leg and lifting her head for a better view of the butter.

"Yeah," Joanne replies over Beth to Steve from the kitchen. "I did the whole thing."

Shifting forward onto his elbows as Joanne speaks, Greg glances quickly at Beth, lifts his corn to his mouth, leans into it, and takes two more bites.

"I want a piece of butter on. . .," says Beth, again leaning her

right elbow beside her pushed-away plate. She reaches and points first with her left hand and then with her right toward the butter.

"I want a piece of butter on my plate!" Returning her left arm to her lap and looking at her corn, she tilts her head to the right and touches its buttered surface with the fingers of her right hand.

Greg leans further forward and takes a third and fourth bite of corn, then chews rapidly as he looks past Steve toward the kitchen. Steve glances up at the wall clock to his left and back down at his corn without looking at Beth or interrupting his buttering. Moving his elbows further onto the table and shifting forward in his seat, Greg lifts his corn to eye level and inspects it while he chews.

Beth examines the fingers of her right hand. "I'mmmmmm. . .," she resumes, twisting from left to right. Taking hold of the table edge with both hands and squirming further back into her chair, she looks up toward the kitchen doorway. "I want a piece of butter on my plate," she says as Joanne comes in from the kitchen.

Swinging her right arm at her side and holding her left forearm across her waist, Joanne walks in watching Beth. She stops beside her chair and places her left hand on the chair back while Steve rests his knife on the left side of his plate and reaches in front of his place setting for the salt shaker. "These many," says Beth, continuing to look up at Joanne and reaching out her right hand with two fingers raised.

With her left hand resting on her chair back, Joanne looks at Beth's fingers while Steve salts his corn and Greg takes a series of four bites with his elbows on the table and his head lifted back. Looking down at her place setting, she reaches with her right hand for her butter knife, then looks at Beth again as she pulls her chair out from the table and says, "Aw, no," shaking her head. "See, she, she'll, all she eats is butter!" She glances from Steve to the butter dish while Greg turns his corn in front of his face and Steve continues salting.

Beth looks at her plate and rests her right arm on the table beside her place setting, then looks at her right hand and touches the table with two stiffened fingers. Finished speaking, Joanne picks up her knife and steps between her chair and the table. Taking the butter dish in her left hand, she bends forward and scoops butter from it with her knife.

"You going to heat up those peas?" Steve asks her while he salts his corn without looking up.

Looking at her stiff-fingered right hand, Beth taps the table beside her plate three times as Steve speaks. Joanne answers Steve somewhat breathlessly, "Yah," and puts the first pat of butter on Beth's plate while Beth watches. Standing bent over the table with her weight on her left palm beside the butter dish, Joanne looks at the dish again and explains, "I'm going to do the peas, for the kids" -- she

takes another pat of butter from the dish while Beth watches the knife -- "and I'm frying--"

Without looking up from his salting, Steve asks her, "You're not going to have any corn, right?" Greg takes two bites of corn as Steve finishes speaking, then looks over at Steve's corn and hitches himself forward in his seat before turning back to his own.

With her hand stiff-fingered and her fingertips touching the table, Beth follows the knife to her plate as Joanne deposits a second pat of butter. "Yeah, I'll have a piece of corn, but, get ready," Joanne says in a warning voice as she returns her knife to the butter dish. Beth watches the knife entering the butter. Scraping a third pat of butter onto Beth's plate, Joanne lifts both arms and sits.

"Two," says Beth, looking at her plate. She shifts in her seat, spreading the fingers of her right hand in the air as she repositions her weight on her right elbow and lifts her left hand from her lap. Leaning her forehead on her right fist, she reaches out with her left hand and gingerly touches her butter with her fingers.

Placing the salt on the table to Joanne's right, Steve looks at Beth, then down at his plate and takes his corn in both hands. Joanne, finally seated, looks up at Beth at the same time Steve does and leans forward, resting the insides of her wrists against the table edge at either side of her plate with her hands loosely fisted. "Okay?" she asks Beth.

Greg hunches against the table and lifts his corn to his mouth while Joanne speaks. "Three," he corrects Beth, his words muffled by corn as he takes the first of three bites. "Shhh," says Steve, looking at Greg as he lifts his own corn.

Continuing to lean toward Beth, Joanne glances briefly at the cornbowl, then back at her and asks, "Beth, you going to eat your corn, or should Mommy eat it?" Beth stares at her plate, her right elbow on the table, her right fist against her forehead, and the fingers of her left hand moving in her butter.

Steve inspects his corn and keeps an eye on Greg while Joanne speaks, then looks up at Beth. "You're not going to eat that corn, Beth?" he asks. In mid-sentence he rests his elbows on the table and lifts his corn higher, leaning forward and taking three small bites from left to right.

Holding his corn down near his plate while he chews, Greg looks quickly from his corn to Steve as Steve speaks, then to his right at Beth's plate while Joanne turns her gaze past him from Beth to the bowl of corn, leaving Beth's corn on her plate. "It's a beautiful ear," she says. "I'll eat it," Greg overlaps her. He swallows and looks from Beth's corn to his own while Beth takes her left hand from her plate, turns to Greg, and puts her buttery fingers in her mouth.

"All right, I'll leave it," Joanne mutters as she leans over and puts her left hand in the cornbowl, picking out a fresh ear. Greg takes

another three bites and looks forward chewing as Joanne pulls an ear from the bowl and puts it on her plate. "I'll take the little one," she mutters again.

Resting his corn on his plate while Joanne picks out a piece, Steve reaches in front of him with his left hand for the salt. Correcting himself, he finds it at Joanne's right and begins turning and salting his corn while Beth sits forward and takes her fingers from her mouth, putting them back in her butter. Joanne picks up her knife and pulls her corn across the plate closer to her with her left hand. "Huh!" she grunts, lifting her chin in Steve's direction and smiling uncertainly. Looking at her plate, she begins sawing her corn with her knife while Steve salts his corn without looking up.

"This is good corn, Beth," Steve says, looking at his own corn and salting. "Mmmmmmm, the best we've had all year." As he finishes speaking he glances to his left and replaces the salt beside Joanne, then looks back at his plate and picks up his corn. Greg swallows while Steve is speaking, then looks back to his corn and takes the first of three bites as Joanne cuts through hers. Her knife clanks against the plate and she quickly lifts her hands a few inches, while Steve pauses, looking at the corn in his hands, then leans forward and brings it to his mouth. Sitting on the edge of her chair with her right fist to her forehead, Beth runs her fingers through her butter.

"I know it," Joanne says thoughtfully. "They had a lot of it too,"

she adds as she readjusts her corn on her plate and begins sawing through it a second time further down the ear. Steve finishes two bites, then sits back turning his corn while Greg bites into his again and Joanne continues, "You know, it's cheaper at Gino's. . . ." Pausing, she glances to the left of her plate and picks up her napkin while Beth looks up in Greg's direction and puts her buttery fingers in her mouth, moaning pleasurably, "Mmmmmm." Greg finishes three rapid bites and turns his corn in his hands while Joanne continues, ". . . than it was at, um. . . ." then pauses again to cut her corn which she holds with the napkin in her left hand. "Mmmmmm," moans Beth a second time as she returns her fingers to her plate and runs them through her butter. Steve lifts his corn to his mouth and bites. ". . . at that stand, that the A&P had," Joanne concludes, sitting further back from the table and noisily sawing her corn, clearly with increasing difficulty.

As Greg again leans aggressively into his corn, Steve finishes three bites and looks down chewing, then glances sideways at Joanne and says through a mouthful of kernels, "I know it," looking back at the corn in his hands. Greg finishes three large bites and looks sharply at the table in front of his plate as Steve continues, "That's why it's good. . . ." Swallowing, he leans closer to his corn while Greg looks back at his and takes two more bites. Turning to her left and leaning her head on her right shoulder Beth puts the

buttery fingers of her left hand in her mouth. ". . .to get it there," Steve continues, lifting his corn to take a bite. "Mmmmmmm," Beth moans. Leaning over his plate, Steve holds his corn away from his mouth. "It's seventy-nine, wasn't it?" he asks.

Joanne gives up the attempt to cut her corn and puts her napkin down beside her plate while she lifts her right hand with the knife in it to the right side of her face and pushes back her hair with her hand. "Yup," she says, then looks at the butter dish and with her left hand adjusts the corn on her plate while Steve leans further forward and bites into his. With her head tilted to the right, Beth takes her fingers from her mouth and looks at them while Greg takes another bite of corn and chews rapidly. As Steve takes a second and third bite, Joanne looks at the butter dish. Reaching for butter with her knife, she whispers, "God, is it hot."

Finished inspecting her fingers, Beth gives them another lick and puts them back in her butter as Joanne raises her head slightly and pushes her hair away from her face with her left hand. While Beth looks up to her left again and tilts her head to the right, bringing her hand back to her mouth and sucking butter off each finger in turn, Joanne transfers a knifeful of butter to her corn and looks down as she butters and turns it. Chewing rapidly, Greg turns and examines his.

Steve finishes two more bites and lowers his corn to his plate, then

sits back, looks down to his left, and reaches with his left hand for his fork as he speaks to Greg. "Aren't you, uh. . ." Pausing, he puts his fork on his plate and glances at Greg, who is leaning against the table taking three huge bites of corn. Looking back to his left, Steve continues, ". . .warm, Greg, with that. . ." He pauses again and picks up his napkin, folding it in both hands and looking once more at Greg as he lifts it toward his mouth. "With that long shirt on?" Joanne asks, glancing at Greg from her buttering. Steve wipes his mouth with his napkin from left to right, turning away from Greg.

Polishing off the last of her fingers while Steve speaks, Beth again puts them in her butter. Greg, hunched forward, takes two more quick bites of corn as Joanne completes Steve's question. He fumbles his corn, catches it, then looks quickly back and forth over it and says, "Nope," without looking at either Steve or Joanne.

Joanne scoops butter from her plate while Steve puts his napkin down, picks up his corn, and glances at Greg. "You make it look like it's wintertime," Joanne says without looking up from her buttering. Placing his elbows on the table and looking from Greg to his corn, Steve leans to bite.

"I'm not," Greg tells them through a full mouth as he chews his corn and looks back and forth over the remains.

Turning to her left, Beth briefly puts her fingers in her mouth, then returns them to her plate while Steve takes two bites of corn and

Greg takes three. Joanne puts down both knife and corn and swings her legs around to the right of her seat without looking up. Standing and turning toward the kitchen, she glances back at Greg and says, "Well, if that's your thing," then strides into the kitchen.



5:15:42

Beth looks off to her left as she puts the fingers of her left hand in her mouth. Greg, chewing, looks after Joanne as she leaves the room, then at Beth as Steve speaks to her.

"Hey, Beth, listen," Steve says, looking from his corn to Beth and chewing while he speaks, then back down.

Beth looks at Steve, licking her fingers, then at her plate again and takes her fingers from her mouth. "Yah," she answers. Putting her fingers back in her mouth as she finishes speaking, she again looks up at Steve while Greg looks from her to his corn and swallows.

Looking down and holding his corn ready, Steve continues, "If we're going to go to the drive-in" -- Greg bites into his corn as Steve glances at Beth -- "you better have some food to eat."

Beth looks from Steve to her plate and lightly touches her butter while he's talking.

Steve and Greg each take three bites of corn almost in unison.

"Yes, Beth," Joanne calls from the kitchen, "if you don't eat

now" -- Beth looks up to her left and puts her fingers in her mouth --
"you're really not going to have a chance."

While Joanne is speaking, Greg sits up and places his elbows on the table, then looks from his corn to Steve and says,
"Yes we will--"

" 'Cause once we're at the drive-in. . . , " Steve says, putting his corn down and looking first to the left of his plate, then up at Beth as he cuts Greg off. Greg looks toward his corn and chews while Beth glances from her plate to Steve, dropping her left hand to the table in front of her and fluffing her hair with her right. ". . . you can't say 'I'm hungry,' " Steve continues, picking up his napkin in his left hand and shaking his head. Then still looking at Beth, he brings his napkin to his mouth and adds, "We won't be able to get you anything." As he finishes he looks down and wipes his mouth from left to right with his napkin, turning back to her on the second pass.

"But I'm not hungry, " Beth says, turned toward Steve with her left forearm resting in front of her, her right elbow on the table, and her right hand poised in the air. Tilting her head, she flicks her right hand through her hair and leans her head against her palm facing Steve.

Greg shifts his right leg forward and leans into his corn as Beth speaks, taking two bites while Steve looks to the left of his plate and puts down his napkin. "Yeah, but you might be then, " Steve says,

resting his elbows on the table as he finishes speaking, then picking up his corn and looking at it.

Following a large bite of corn, Greg looks sharply down at his lap.

Glancing at her plate while she rests her head on her right palm, Beth looks up and leans toward Steve, who stops before biting into his corn and looks back at her as she begins speaking. "I won't be--," she says.

"Well, would you eat some hamburger?" Steve breaks in, speaking quickly. As he speaks he raises his eyebrows at Beth, who kicks her right leg and continues to look at him.

Holding his corn over his plate and sitting back slightly from the table, Greg looks at Beth while Steve continues, "The hamburger will be ready soon," still speaking rapidly and nodding encouragement at Beth. "Would you like some hamburger?"

"That's meat," Greg adds, also nodding at Beth.

With her head against her palm, Beth looks at her corn while Steve speaks, then nods uncertainly first at Steve and then Greg. Looking at Steve again, she closes her right hand into a fist, grabbing a handful of her hair.

"Okay," says Steve, and leans into his corn. Greg looks from Beth to his corn and turns it, glances over it at Steve's, then lifts his and takes a bite.

Turning suddenly from Steve, to Greg, to her plate, Beth points

with her right hand at her corn and says indignantly, "This not meat!"

Pausing with his mouth open, ready to bite, Greg looks at Beth, then forward, and pushes his corn away from him, saying, "I know but--"

Finishing his third bite and about to take another, Steve takes his corn away from his mouth and sits up chewing, looking from Beth to it. "No," he says with his mouth full, then crosses his legs and pulls his feet back under his chair, readjusting his elbows on the table.

Greg glances at Steve and continues, "She's gonna. . ." He stops while he shifts in his chair, then glances up at Joanne entering from the kitchen and nods as he says to Beth, "Hamburger's meat." Placing his forearms against the table edge, he leans to his corn and takes two huge bites, watching Beth's plate.

Looking down at her own plate as she walks to the right of her chair, Joanne places her left hand on her corn and her right on the salt shaker as she sits. Steve finishes chewing and leans slowly toward his corn again while Beth looks up at Joanne entering the room, then at her corn as Joanne sits. "Good," Beth says quietly, and reaches out her left hand for her glass. Greg takes his corn from his mouth and looks at it, chewing, as Steve swallows and says, "It's corn." Steve begins to eat his from left to right.

Turning and salting her corn as Beth pulls her glass closer, Joanne

says bewilderedly, "Corn on the cob. . ." Taking her glass in both hands, Beth tilts it to her mouth while Joanne speaks. Greg finishes chewing and takes two voracious bites. "The last time, you ate it all," continues Joanne, glancing briefly from her corn to Beth and back while she puts down the salt with her right hand and lifts the corn in her left.

Steve lowers his after four small bites and looks at it, chewing slowly. Taking her corn in both hands and leaning her elbows on the table, Joanne turns her head slightly to her left and bites into it with the right side of her mouth. She glances at Beth over her first bite, looks at her corn, then again bites from the right side and glances at Greg while Steve, looking down and chewing, mutters, "Hint." He continues to look down at his corn, pausing in his eating while Joanne brings hers back to her mouth, turning her head to the left as she bites a third time. At Steve's right, Greg leans far over his plate and tears violently at his remaining corn. Having just previously taken two substantial bites without chewing, he now sits back from the table chewing a large mouthful while he glances from Beth, who continues drinking, back to the corn he holds over his plate.

Glancing at Greg, then back to his corn which he lifts to his mouth as he speaks, Steve says, "Gregory, it's not, it isn't a race," and bites, facing slightly in his direction.

Turned toward Steve while she holds her glass in both hands and drinks, Beth brings her right foot back under her chair and hooks her toes over the chair rung as he speaks. Chewing, Greg looks at Steve's corn while Steve takes a second bite. Joanne holds hers off to her left and reaches with her right hand across her plate for her napkin, then wipes her lap as Steve takes his corn from his mouth and looks at Greg. Looking from Steve's corn to his own as Steve looks in his direction, Greg says simply, "I know," then takes two somewhat more restrained bites while Steve looks on.

Joanne tilts her head back and shakes her hair out of her eyes, then drops her napkin to the left of her plate and puts her elbows back on the table, biting her corn with the right side of her mouth while Steve watches Greg. As Greg sits back chewing, Steve looks at his own corn and turns it, shaking his head slightly and saying, "We're going to have plenty of it, since Beth won't eat any."

Still turned in Steve's direction, Beth stops drinking as he finishes speaking and runs her mouth from right to left and left to right over the rim of her glass.

Joanne turns her corn while Steve speaks, then takes another characteristic bite. Greg leans and takes four quick bites, lunging after the last as Steve bends forward and bites and Joanne chews and swallows.

Holding her glass in both hands, Beth runs her mouth from right

to left over the rim, and says, "I want to go-wo."

Leaning back from his latest assault on his corn and chewing while Beth speaks, Greg glances at Steve's while Steve finishes his second bite. Lowering his corn over his plate, Steve looks up at Beth and asks, "Hmmm?" while at his left Joanne bites. Greg turns quickly away as Steve looks past him, sitting straighter in his chair and tending to his own corn. Steve lifts his chin at Beth while he chews. "What?" he asks. Joanne lifts her corn again and bites with the right side of her mouth, looking over at Greg.

Biting again, Greg looks at Beth while Steve continues to look past him in her direction. "I want to go to the drive-in," Beth says, moving her mouth from left to right on the rim of her glass. Chewing, Joanne turns her corn in front of her while Greg takes his away from his mouth after three fast bites and does the same, looking at it with his head tilted back.

Turning from Beth to the wall clock at his left, Steve says, "Well, it's too early." He glances again at Beth, his mustache twitching while he chews, then looks down and swallows before taking another bite.

Resting her weight on her elbows, Joanne swallows and gestures with her head toward the windows as Steve leans into his corn. "Yeah. Lookit," she says, lifting her corn toward her mouth as she speaks bemusedly, "you have to wait until it gets dark."

Beth sits quietly, turned to Steve and holding her glass on the table with both hands while he and Joanne speak to her.

Steve takes another bite of his corn as Joanne bites into hers as before. Tilting his head far to the left, Greg inspects his from a new angle while he chews, then raises his head back, lifts the corn to his mouth, and bites into it twice as Joanne and Steve simultaneously take theirs from their mouths. Finished biting, Greg chews with his head slightly back.

Looking at her corn, Joanne says through a full mouth, "What movies--," and stops, bringing it to her mouth instead as Steve glances from his corn to Beth and says, "We're going to go in about an hour and. . ." He looks sideways at the wall clock, pausing in his speech and chewing. Greg takes three bites to Joanne's one while Joanne looks over her corn at Beth and Steve finishes, ". . .three-quarters," looking again at the corn in his hands.

"Um hm. . .," says Joanne, taking her corn from her mouth just as Greg does, and nodding while she chews and looks at it. Greg returns his to his mouth and eats while Beth looks back and forth between Steve and Joanne, unhooking her toes from her chair rung and playing against it with her foot.

Steve swallows and leans slowly into his corn. Nodding her head in a swallowing motion, Joanne adds, "And we plan to get there early" -- she raises her corn to her mouth and looks over it at the

kids while Greg takes his from his mouth after three bites and looks at it chewing -- "so maybe if there's a. . ." Joanne pauses while she moves her corn away from her and examines it, just as Steve finishes a third bite and does the same. ". . .playground. . .," continues Joanne as Greg bites and she brings her own up to her mouth again, looking once more from Beth to Greg over it, ". . .you guys can go to it."

Beth pulls her glass slightly closer and tilts it, drinking quietly. Greg and Steve turn their corn and Joanne bites into hers.



5:16:53

Interrupting her drinking, Beth looks at Joanne and makes a questioning sound just as Steve puts down the left end of his corn and reaches for his napkin. "Who knows what we're going to see?" he asks. Joanne takes her corn away from her mouth and looks at it while Steve speaks.

Lunging, Greg bites four times, then sits back and chews while he looks at his corn. Beth turns toward Steve with her glass to her mouth, tilting her head progressively further back while under her chair she presses the toes of her right foot against the chair rung.

As Greg takes his corn from his mouth, Steve glances past him at Beth, then looks down as he wipes his mouth from left to right with his napkin. Joanne takes another sideways bite and glances at the kids at about the same time Steve looks at Beth, then takes her corn away from her mouth and chews. Lifting it to her mouth again, she looks over at Greg and asks, "What're we going to see at the drive-in, Greg?" his name muffled as

she bites with the side of her mouth.

Greg looks forward, turning his corn and chewing, while Beth drinks with her head tilted back.

Placing his napkin beside his plate as Joanne finishes speaking and looking briefly toward Greg, Steve says from the right side of his mouth, "Show me if she can remember it, Greg," then looks down and lifts his corn from his plate.

Glancing at Steve and removing his left hand from his corn, Greg takes hold of his glass and looks down to his left with a nodding motion, then turns again to the cob in his right hand without lifting his glass from the table.

Joanne takes her corn from her mouth and looks at it while Steve lifts his above his plate and rests his forearms against the table edge, glancing briefly at Beth, who continues to drink with her head tilted back. "What movies are we going to see, Beth?" Steve asks more loudly as he leans forward and bites.

Chewing, Greg glances to his right and drops his corncob, then reaches out his right hand toward Beth's plate as Steve finishes speaking and Joanne, looking down, searches with her left hand for some place to put down her corncob. Taking her glass from her mouth, Beth looks down to her left and places it on the table while Greg lifts the uneaten corn from her plate and drops it on his own without taking his left hand from his glass.

"Uh, 'Dumbo,'" Beth says melodically, looking from her glass to Steve and touching the right side of her face with her right hand.

While Beth is replying to Steve, Joanne puts her corncob on the side of her plate and picks up her napkin with her left hand, leaning back from the table and tossing her hair away from her face as she takes the napkin in both hands. She glances toward Beth and lifts the napkin to her mouth as Steve finishes a third bite of corn. Taking his corn from his mouth and nodding his head, Steve says, "Um hm," and begins chewing without looking up.

Joanne wipes her mouth from right to left with her napkin and shifts position slightly in her chair while Greg holds onto his glass and tries unsuccessfully to balance his corncob along the far edge of his plate. Holding her glass in her left hand while looking at Steve, Beth reaches her left foot back beneath her chair and continues.

"We're going to see--"

"About. . .," Joanne prompts as she looks down to her left replacing her napkin.

"--two of them," Beth ventures, leaning her cheek against her right fist while still looking at Steve and pumping both legs up and down.

Looking at her plate, Joanne takes her knife in her right hand and a new piece of corn in her left. Steve looks at Beth, chewing.

"I don't know," Beth says. She puts her right fist to her mouth and

again pumps her right leg up and down as Joanne reaches out with her knife for butter and Greg, continuing trying to balance his cob on the edge of his plate, looks to his left and lifts his glass.

While Steve looks at Beth and chews slowly, Greg holds his corncob steady with his right hand and tilts his head back to drink. "A movie about what kind of an animal?" Steve asks. Joanne outters without looking up.

Steve continues to lean toward Beth, who at the same time watches him, her upper arm and elbow resting on the table and her right fist in front of her mouth. "I don't know," Beth says again. She takes her hand from her mouth and holds it to the right of her face as she continues to look at him and he looks back, lifting his head slightly. Between them, tilting his head progressively further back beneath the glass he drinks from, Greg deftly raises his right hand over his place setting, leaving the corncob balanced on the far edge of his plate.

"The. . .," Steve prompts, as Joanne, lifting her head without looking up from buttering, simultaneously says, "Bea. . ."

Continuing to look at Steve, Beth puts her right hand on her glass while at her left Greg lowers his glass and looks from the cob balanced on his plate to Steve, then tilts his head to the right and glances at Joanne as he wipes his mouth on the sleeve of his lifted right arm. He transfers the glass from his left to his right hand as Steve again speaks.

"Bears," Steve rumbles like a bear. "'Bear Country,' we're going to see," Joanne says in a deep voice right after Steve, without looking up from buttering.

Greg glances at Beth as Joanne speaks, then looks forward and puts his left hand on his kidnapped ear of corn while Steve leans and bites. Beth nods, looking from Steve to Joanne, then takes her glass in both hands and lowers her mouth to its rim as Steve takes a second bite. Looking across at Joanne, who continues to look down at her corn while she butters, Greg says quickly, "And then we're going to see one about. . ." Pausing, he looks past the glass in his right hand at Beth, who continues watching Steve over the rim of her glass while she bounces her right leg up and down. ". . . a wha--?" Greg asks.

Steve looks from his corn to Beth and raises his voice. "About Herbie the. . .," he prompts.

Still turned in Beth's direction, Greg again lifts his glass, tilts his head back, and drains it while Joanne reaches out with her knife for more butter and Steve continues to watch Beth expectantly.

Looking at Steve with her mouth on her glass and her right leg kicking beneath the table, Beth says with childish indistinction, "Bug."

Greg lowers his glass and sits forward while Joanne brings her butter knife back to her corn and resumes buttering, meanwhile moving her mouth as if thinking aloud. Steve chews and

continues to look at Beth.

"I don't know," Beth says impatiently, running her mouth back and forth on the lip of her glass while she continues to look up at Steve. Leaning toward his place setting and taking his left hand off his corn, Greg transfers his glass from his right to his left hand while Beth speaks.

Steve looks at his plate. "Lovebug," he says before she's finished speaking, then lifts his corn and bites into it while Greg puts down his glass with his left hand and simultaneously reaches for the new ear of corn on his plate with his right. Still moving her lips, Joanne puts her knife down and reaches out her right hand for the salt shaker.

"Lovebu-u-u-wug," says Beth, while Greg takes his balanced corncob in his left hand and moves it off his plate. Joanne lifts the salt shaker and begins salting as Steve finishes another bite and takes his corn away from his mouth, looking down at it and chewing.



5:17:21

"Yeah," Joanne says thoughtfully as Beth finishes speaking. She continues to salt her corn while across the table Greg begins to roll his new ear of corn in butter with his right hand even as he moves the old cob off his plate with his left. Lifting her head slightly without looking up or interrupting her salting, Joanne begins speaking excitedly. "Uh, Jerry went to see the first Lovebug movie. . .," she says.

Holding her glass tilted against her mouth in both hands, Beth turns to Joanne while Greg takes his corn in his left hand and rolls it in butter, moving his utensils closer to him on his plate with his right. Steve lifts his corn without looking up from his previous bites and takes two more while Joanne speaks, then places it on his plate and still looking down says with a full mouth, "Um hm."

". . .remember how many times he saw it. . .," Joanne continues. She looks over at Steve while she puts down the salt with her right hand.

Leaning slightly away from Joanne on his right forearm while he chews, Steve turns his head somewhat in her direction and nods without looking up. With his arms outstretched over his plate, Greg rolls his corn in butter with both hands while Beth rocks forward and back in her chair, stimulating her mouth on her glass as she looks over at Joanne.

Joanne leans toward Steve with a nudging motion of her shoulder as she leaves the salt on the table to her right. ". . .he was at the. . .," she continues, laughter rising in her voice. Steve nods again and swallows, then mutters, "Yeah." He looks to the left of his plate and picks up his napkin in his left hand.

Taking her corn in both hands and placing her elbows on the table, Joanne looks from Steve to it while Steve takes his napkin in both hands and wipes his mouth from left to right, shaking his head back and forth. ". . .a-Academy every day," Joanne continues, "it was" -- she shakes her hair out of her face and looks at her corn -- "good."

Steve looks down in front of him and wipes his hands on his napkin while Joanne brings her corn to her mouth and raises her eyebrows, turning her head slightly to the left as she bites.

"Why?" Greg asks without looking up, rolling his corn rapidly in butter. Steve puts his napkin down with his left hand after Greg speaks, looking down and working corn out of his teeth with his tongue.

"'Cause he loved it," Joanne answers, her words muffled by corn as she looks ahead of her. She takes her corn from her mouth and leans forward on her elbows while she looks at it and chews.

Greg sits further forward, rolling his corn as Joanne answers him. Without looking up, Steve again rests his right elbow and forearm on the table, taking his beer can in his left hand and lifting it toward his mouth.

"I go. . .," says Beth, who has watched Joanne over her glass throughout.

"I wonder if this will be any good then," Greg says, overlapping Beth. He leans back a little and glances at Joanne, then looks down and continues rolling his corn in butter as Joanne leans toward hers and hesitates as if to catch a kernel slipping from her mouth. Steve tilts his head back and drinks.

"I go," Beth says again, much more emphatically, interrupting Greg and thrusting her head at Joanne. She looks down at her glass and sets it on the table as Joanne lifts her corn and glances at her over it, then down as she bites with the right side of her mouth. Steve finishes drinking and lowers his beer can to the table as Greg picks up his corn in both hands and leans forward.

Looking at her right hand as she reaches out toward Joanne, Beth imperiously touches the table, then her plate, and says, "First I want to see 'Dumbo.'" She lifts and drops her right leg as she speaks, then

looks across at Joanne while running the fingers of her right hand back and forth across the plate's buttery surface.

Greg leans forward on his elbows and takes two large bites of his corn while she speaks, then sits back chewing and inspects it while Joanne takes another sideways bite of hers, looking briefly over at Beth. Steve looks from his beer can to the bowl of corn as Beth finishes speaking. Leaning toward Greg on his right elbow, he reaches with his left hand and takes a fresh ear of corn. "You didn't see the first one, did you, Greg?" he asks.

"First?" Beth blurts out loudly, looking from Joanne to her hand, which she lifts and drops, touching her plate with her fingers. Under the table she swings her right leg back and forth.

Steve puts the fresh ear of corn on his plate as Beth blurts out her question. Greg looks over at Steve's new ear of corn as Joanne lifts her corn to her mouth. Glancing at Beth, Joanne then looks down and bites into it. "No," Steve says to Beth as he looks from his corn to the butter dish. Picking up his knife from the left side of his plate while he holds his corn in his right hand, he reaches out toward the butter and continues, "First I think they're going to have 'Bear Country.'"

Greg watches Steve pick up his knife, then follows the movement of Steve's hand to the butter dish and asks softly, "What?"

Joanne nods slightly and says, "Um hm," holding her corn away

from her mouth and looking at it as she chews. Steve takes butter on his knife and returns the knife to his corn.

Standing on her right leg and lifting her elbow off the table, Beth leans against the edge of her seat as she continues to finger the butter on her plate. Watching her fingers, she says, "Okay."

Greg continues to look at the butter dish after Steve's knife has left it, then turns to his corn, leans to bite, and hesitates. "And then 'Dumbo,'" Steve says, leaning on his right forearm as he butters with his knife in his left hand.

Joanne and Greg bite sequentially as Steve finishes speaking.

"Then 'Dumbo?'" Beth asks wistfully, watching the plate as she trails her fingers through her butter.

Finishing a second bite, Greg pushes his corn away from his mouth and sits back, looking at it and chewing. Joanne reaches her left hand to her mouth and catches a straying kernel. "And then Herbie," Steve concludes, turning his corn as he butters it. Chewing, Joanne returns her left hand to her corn.

Lifting the right end of his corn and buttering, Steve asks, "Did you ever see 'Dumbo,' Greg?"

Without moving his elbows from their resting places at either side of his plate, Greg turns his head far around to his left and wipes his mouth on his shirt at shoulder height, saying, "Yup," then wipes

his mouth on his shirt a second time.

Beth puts her buttery fingers in her mouth as Greg replies to Steve, then turns in Steve and Greg's direction and rests her upper arm and elbow on the table.

Steve turns and butters more quickly as Joanne looks to her left and bites. "It's good, isn't it?" Steve asks Greg, lifting his corn higher and buttering rapidly.

Turned in Steve's direction, Beth continues sucking butter off her fingers while Joanne takes her corn from her mouth, looks at Steve, and overlaps, "Yes, I took him," then turns back to her corn.

Through wiping his mouth, Greg turns forward and nods . in one motion, replying, "Yup." He chews while he looks at his corn.

Sucking butter off her thumb, Beth turns from Steve to Joanne, who looks forward, brings her corn to her mouth, and adds, "I took him myself."

"I really like 'Dumbo,'" Steve overlaps her, leaning further to his right as he stretches out his left arm between Joanne and Greg to get butter.

Joanne bites with the side of her mouth, glancing briefly at Beth and down as Beth takes her hand from her mouth and looks at her plate, then turns from Steve to his knife in the butter dish. Twisting on her seat and moving her legs about while she waves her right hand from the wrist, Beth calls loudly, "I love --." Joanne takes

her corn from her mouth and looks at it as Beth speaks.

"Me too," Greg says hesitantly to Steve under Beth's shouting, glancing quickly toward Beth, then back at his corn.

"--I love both them," says Beth, continuing to look at the butter dish as she waves her right hand. She momentarily stops jerking her legs, then begins moving them again. "I like--"

Continuing to lean toward Greg, Steve brings butter back to his corn and speaks over Beth as he begins buttering, saying loudly and pointedly, "Beth's going to really like 'Dumbo.'" As Steve speaks, Greg watches him butter. Joanne takes another oblique bite of her corn, glancing briefly at Beth, then down.

Jerking her legs rapidly while she points at her plate, Beth calls out, "I like butter."

Joanne quickly takes another bite and looks at her corn.

"Yeah," Greg says thoughtfully to Steve. He looks up at Steve's face and raises his voice over Beth as he says excitedly, "I like Bongo." He continues to look up at Steve while Beth calls, "I want. . .," still pointing at her plate, then even louder, "I like" -- straightening her body, she pushes her chair back along the floor as she looks from her plate to Steve -- "butter and soda."

Shortening her time between bites, Joanne looks slightly left and takes another while Beth is speaking, then turns her corn rapidly.

"The bear?" Steve asks, lifting his head slightly and leaning a little further toward Greg as he speaks over Beth's last syllable and continues buttering.

"Bongo," explains Greg, overlapping Steve's question, then nods once while still looking up at Steve's face and says, "Yeah."

From the edge of her chair Beth continues to point over her plate. Twisting her head from left to right and looking back at her plate, she calls out, "I like butter--"

"Bongo?" asks Steve, tilting his head and frowning attentively while he turns and butters his corn.

"--and soda," Beth persists, again straightening her legs and lifting herself up in her chair as she points at her plate, looking toward Joanne.

Joanne turns her corn and takes a series of three bites, moving from left to right along the ear and surveying Beth and Greg. Beth stands, pushing her chair further back and continuing to look at Joanne.

"You mean. . .Bonga?" asks Steve puzzledly. He looks over the table and reaches out for butter with his knife.

"Bongo," Greg says quietly, overlapping Steve and continuing to look up at his face.

"Bongo," Steve corrects himself seriously as Greg speaks. He leans forward with his weight still on his right forearm and the thrust

of his body toward Greg as he puts his knife in the butter.

Beth moves sideways to her right between her chair and the table as Steve speaks, looking from Joanne to him and shouting, "Um, Daddy, Daddy--"

"Bongo," Greg says, and nods. He glances at Steve's knife in the butter, then back to his own corn as Steve takes butter on his knife and transfers it to his plate. Joanne turns her head and takes another bite at the same time, lurching to catch a kernel slipping from her mouth.

--Daddy and Mommy," Beth persists loudly, looking between Joanne and Steve and hugging the table corner with her arms.

Greg sits forward, leaning his forearms against the table edge, and bites into his corn twice while Steve resumes turning and buttering his. Bringing her corn down over her plate and releasing it with her right hand, Joanne lifts the hand to her mouth and pushes back the escaping kernel without looking up.

"I like. . ." Letting go of the table corner with her right hand as she begins speaking again, Beth looks down at the floor and hesitates at the sight of Holmes. ". . . so. . ." Her left hand remains on the table corner and her right arm swings outward as she turns to her right and sweeps her gaze forward over Holmes' back. Behind her at the table, Greg looks over his corn at Steve's plate where Steve continues buttering without looking up. Looking forward, Joanne licks her

fingers.

Beth tips her head to the left and loosely drops her right hand to her side as she exclaims, "Hey, Bomes!" Holmes slowly raises his head while Beth lifts her right knee high and stomps with delight, looking back and forth over Holmes as he slowly lumbers to his front feet.

Looking at the fingers of her right hand, Joanne drops her corn from her left and picks up her napkin, leaning back from the table and glancing down at her lap. Greg looks back and forth between his own and Steve's corn while Steve continues to butter and Joanne wipes both hands on her napkin. Bending to Holmes, Beth throws her arms around his neck and back as he stands on all fours, rising under her and lifting her with him. "Umm," says Beth, pressing her left cheek against the back of Holmes' neck and hugging him.



5:18:08

(end of Part I of 48 minutes)

